

Military Breakfast Honors Award of Excellence Recipient as Keynote Speaker

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Good morning COL Forman, COL Helms and fellow Army dietitians! When COL Forman requested I do this, at first, I was very flattered and excited. Then, I became a little nervous when I started thinking about what I would say to a group of dietitians ranging from dietetic intern to Colonel. Not to mention, this is a room full of published scientists, specialized clinicians and successful managers. What do I have to say that will have an impact on everyone? I decided to address you in groups. Some of you may fall into more than one group.

Group #1: Without hesitation the first group I must address includes those of you who have deployed. Not only those recently deployed to Iraq, but everyone who has deployed. I thank you for your sacrifice. I had difficulty leaving my 3 year old and 11 month old just for this 5-day TDY. Some of you have sacrificed up to a year away from your families and loved ones. You are the reason we are here in this uniform! You have shown the value that dietitians can provide and you have performed miraculously. I thank you for your SELFLESS SERVICE.

Group #2: The next group includes the Lieutenants and dietetic interns. I think everyone here would agree that you have an incredible level of enthusiasm and energy. The first day I signed in to the MEDDAC at Fort Jackson, my LT, LT Amy Baker, was bursting with energy describing her programs, plans and ideas. I had to tell her to please let me sign in first ☺. I also have had the opportunity to observe and train interns while at the Nutrition Care Branch. This group keeps us refreshed with their enthusiasm, new ideas, and willingness to try new things! I thank you for your ENTHUSIASM! I encourage you and challenge you to continue with your incredible energy and enthusiasm.

Group #3: The next group is the most near and dear to me because I fall in this category...the Captains and Majors. You are, without a doubt, the hardest working people on the face of the earth. You are doing more with less as staff officers, section chiefs, and chiefs. You are going to military schools, you are going to civilian schools, and many of you are having/raising families. Many of you, like me, are trying to do all of these things at once. We get stressed with these demands and think we have taken on too much. Then, we accomplish them, and turn around and ask for more!! I thank you for being a great group of peers and encourage you to continue with your DUTY as an officer and dietitian in the U.S. Army. I encourage you and challenge to continue with your hard work and face your challenges as opportunities.

Group #4: Wow, what do I have to say to the Lieutenant Colonels and Colonels. First, I thank you for your vision. Through the past 8.5 years of my military experience, every boss I have had, and I say this with reservation because a few of my old (I mean past ☺) bosses are in this room, have come up with at least one idea that I thought was absolutely crazy. However, a couple months later the idea was a completed project that turned out to be "the greatest thing since sliced bread." Because of your vision, Army dietetics has excelled tremendously just within the few years I have been in. A goal of

mine is to try and be more visionary. Second, I thank this group for your mentorship and willingness to “take care” of junior soldiers. After recently graduating from OAC, I had the opportunity to share and compare with other AMEDD officers. We as dietitians are certainly more “taken care of” than many of our other AMEDD peers. Once again, every boss and senior officer that I have worked with has taken the time to discuss my career both short and long term. I thank you for your VISION and MENTORSHIP. I encourage you and challenge to continue looking after the future of dietitians and 91Ms.

Group #5: Last but certainly not least, I want to address the 91Ms. I saved this group for last, because I want you to remember it the most. I have had the opportunity to work with many 91Ms at the Nutrition Care Branch for the last 4 years. It absolutely opened my eyes to what the 91Ms do for us. They are also a huge part of why we are in these green uniforms. We must continue to put emphasis on not only their training, but also sustainment of their skills. It was such a reward to walk into my new dining facility at Ft. Jackson and see 4 of my 9 enlisted that had recently gone through classes I had taught at the NCB! I now rely on them heavily for so much whether they are working in supply, screening patients or teaching a group of soldiers. I want to thank you, the 91Ms, for the DUTY you do everyday! I challenge you to continue with your hard work and to seek opportunities to continually enhance your skills.

Lastly, I want to leave everyone with a message. As dietitians and Army officers, we are always planning for our futures, especially you visionary LTCs and COLs. I think sometimes we get so busy planning our futures that we forget to have fun today. We are always thinking about that next assignment or that next promotion. I know that some planning is required for our futures and career paths, however, we need to remember to make the most of what we are doing right now. My 3-year old has fun every minute of every day (aside from a tantrum here and there). He is having fun whether we are at Wal-mart, the grocery store, the doctor’s office, and even the dentist’s office. Whether he is cruising in a cart at Wal-mart, letting a doctor check his ears, or a dentist check his teeth he has a smile on his face and a giggle to go with it. He has taught me to be patient and enjoy what I am doing right now. I think this is good advice for us all. Have fun today! In fact if you want, eat chocolate, get it all over your mouth, and run around like a 3 year old. ☺

I am proud to wear this uniform. I am proud to serve my country. I am especially proud to work with such a fine group of professionals. Thank-you.